

# *City of Alexandria, Virginia*

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## **MEMORANDUM**

DATE: APRIL 15, 2015

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: T&ES STAFF

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 5 – WMATA OPERATIONS PLANNING PROCESS

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**ISSUE:** Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) bus operations planning process and interface with the City of Alexandria.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Commission receive the update and provide input on process of City interface with WMATA operations planning.

**BACKGROUND:** The Transportation Commission requested that staff provide them with a summary of the types of operational bus planning work WMATA does, and how Alexandria staff interfaces with these activities. The Alexandria Transit Company Board of Directors updated its bylaws in 2013 to revise the board membership and include additional duties of the board. These duties include receiving updates and providing comment to City staff on transit-related matters, including:

- a. BRT/Transitway operational policy and coordination with other jurisdictions and transit agencies;
- b. DOT Paratransit policy and fares;
- c. Metrobus fare and route changes; and
- d. Implementation of transit infrastructure within the City (excluding Metrorail).

**DISCUSSION:** WMATA manages several operational planning activities regarding their bus services on a regular and ad hoc basis. They include the following groups of activities:

- 1) State of Good Operations (SOGO) Analyses of Bus Services
- 2) Budget Service Planning Proposals
- 3) Detailed Line Analyses
- 4) Detailed Analyses of Specific Issues
  - Metrobus Transit Service Guidelines Study
  - Metrobus Network Effectiveness Study
  - Metrobus Late Night Service Study
- 5) Ad Hoc Transit Analyses

### **State of Good Operations Analyses of the Performance and Structure of Existing Services**

On a monthly basis, WMATA produces ridership counts similar to that illustrated in Attachment 1, which show the ridership of each bus route in comparison with its ridership in the same month of the previous year. This provides an early warning that bus services are either getting too crowded or are not being used efficiently. These monthly reports are provided to the City's representative on the Jurisdictional Coordination Committee.

On an annual basis, WMATA reviews all of its bus services to determine if they could be more efficiently provided. A recent illustration of the supporting documentation WMATA generates is provided in Attachment 2. This review consists of analyzing monthly data, and a detailed examination of the efficiency of all services, which looks at factors including ridership and revenue.

With all of this information, WMATA bus planning staff initiates their annual SOGO analysis. The goal of this analysis is to better allocate resources, so that overcrowded bus services are relieved while underutilized services are trimmed. All of this is done with the assumption that no additional bus operations funds will be provided to WMATA. WMATA develops a set of proposals, in consultation with jurisdictional staff, for better utilization of bus services. A proposal is developed in the spring or early summer, and is brought before the WMATA Board in the summer to approve a set of public hearings. The actual public hearings are held in the Fall, and an extensive public participation effort is mounted by WMATA.

### **Budget Service Planning Proposals**

The SOGO process is the annual process WMATA uses to fine-tune its existing bus services outside of the budget process, since those recommendations do not have a fiscal impact. At times, WMATA's service planning staff is requested to provide proposals which will help bring WMATA's costs down to permit it to be more affordable for all subsidizing jurisdictions as part of the budget process. WMATA uses some of its SOGO work as a basis of these discussions, but much more dramatic proposals might be suggested to balance the budget. Unfortunately, in recent years, City staff has not received information about potential service cuts until they are released to the general public. City staff responds as quickly as possible if any of these ideas are not feasible.

### **Detailed Line Analyses**

More detailed planning analysis is performed on some lines to obtain specific detailed information about the line through public participation and the analysis of data. These analyses identify the strategic needs for program and facilities; review capacity, productivity, reliability, and quality of service indicators; and recommend changes that will improve service for the subject Metrobus Routes.

### **Detailed Analyses of Specific Issues**

WMATA currently has specialized studies in a few areas, which are likely to impact WMATA's service evaluation in the future:

- Metrobus Transit Service Guidelines Study  
(reviewing items such as: bus stop spacing, fare policy/media, service change process, branding and bus stop amenities)

- Metrobus Network Effectiveness
- Metrobus late Night Service Analysis

### **Ad Hoc Service Analyses**

WMATA bus planning has responded to both the instructions of upper management and of jurisdictions to analyze a variety of service planning issues, such as:

- Can WMATA bus services provide an alternative to the Metrorail Blue Line?
- Should Metrobus service to National Harbor be increased?
- How can problems with Route 11Y be addressed?
- Can some routes currently served by WMATA be better served by DASH?

### **WMATA and City of Alexandria Interface:**

Alexandria staff meets regularly with WMATA staff to develop annual operations plans and other operations planning documents, to make bus services in Alexandria and in the region more effective and efficient. City staff analyze impacts on current transit patrons, whether the changes will help or hinder the City's future transportation and land use goals, whether the affected service is cost effective, and if such a proposal can be effectively worked out with neighboring regional partners.

Alexandria staff will work with the Alexandria Transit Board to ensure that materials are shared in a timely manner to have comprehensive discussions about transit operations in Alexandria and provide input to staff. Where budgetary or major policy discussions are necessary, the Transportation Commission will be briefed and have an opportunity to provide input and guidance.

### **ATTACHMENT: Ridership Counts**